



**A message from Philippe Borremans,
BJA Membership Committee Co-Chair
and International Affairs Manager at
Group S - HR & Management Solutions**

Dear BJA Members,

Dear Friends,

First of all we hope that this message finds you well. We all have been impacted at different levels by the COVID-19 crisis. Given the drastic changes our way of life has undergone in the past few months the companies had to adjust and turn their virtual workforce into a competitive asset.

Employers had to manage the shifting work patterns and were fortunately helped by support measures implemented by the Belgian Government. For instance, all cases of temporary unemployment requested from March 13 to August 31, 2020, attributable to the Coronavirus, fall under the regime of temporary unemployment due to “force majeure”.

Many companies implemented telework policies and had to upskill their staff in order for them to still be efficient. Networking during these difficult times has been reduced to the bare minimum. Telework forced companies to suddenly adapt their IT and work processes but meeting people during real life events will always be vital even if employers will have to adapt to new ways of working.

To organize professional meetings such as conferences, trainings... is authorized, provided that the social distancing rules will be followed. The organizers should pay attention while participants enter and exit the meeting because the risk of transmitting the virus is at its highest.

To organize social events with interaction between participants, such as a reception, may take place again starting on July 1st. The maximum number of attendees is set at 50. It is the responsibility of the organizer to strictly respect the hygiene and social distancing rules. We can only hope that the post lockdown will continue to bloom and allow us to network together in real life.

Since June 15, Belgium has lifted the restrictions on its borders to and from the European Union, the United Kingdom and the four non-EU Schengen countries (Switzerland, Liechtenstein, Iceland, Norway). Nevertheless, each country decides independently on whether or not to reopen its borders. Travelling to Belgium from the aforementioned countries is thus authorized, without restriction or any particular measure (quarantine...), whatever the purpose of the trip. On the other hand, if you have to travel to these countries from Belgium, you will have to pay attention to the conditions set by each of them.

At least until July 1st, non-essential travel to and from countries which do not belong to the EU, the United Kingdom or the four EFTA countries continue to be suspended. Afterwards, restrictions will be lifted according to the evolution of the epidemiological situation as well as discussions at the European level.

Each BJA Membership Committee member has a particular set of skills that can help BJA members navigate through this new era. Fortunately, webinars and virtual meetings organized by BJA gave us the opportunity to stay in touch with the members of our Chamber of Commerce. Networking will slowly and hopefully go back to normal but will also evolve with new ways to connect and interact between companies and individuals. While a printed BJA Directory will be postponed to 2021 due to the impact of COVID-19

on the advertisement market, the upcoming new interactive and dynamic BJA website will allow us to connect even more closer.

So don't hesitate to reach out. We will continue to support our members and expand our network.

Philippe Borremans

BJA Membership Committee Co-Chair and International Affairs Manager at Group S - HR & Management Solutions

The BJA Membership Committee is co-chaired together with Vincent Schepens of ANA